

LETTER

FROM A

CLERGY-MAN

OF THE

Church of ENGLAND

TO AN

Eminent Divine

Pretending to be of the same Church;

Desiring his Resolution and Direction about a Compliance with
the present Government, and especially about the Alteration of
the Publick Prayers.

Reverend Sir,

THe Post you are in, and the Character you bear, besides some Personal Respects, induce me to apply my self to you for your Assistance to remove some Doubts that Oppress my Conscience; which I am bound (as indeed every one is) to give Satisfaction to, by an Impartial search after Truth; and the Obligation is the greater upon me, because I have Others to Instruct, and Answer for, as well as my Self; and who (if I mislead them, either by my Doctrine, or Example) will one day lay great part of the blame upon me; I cannot therefore but be Solicitous how I behave my self in this Case towards God, who will require of me some Account for other Mens Souls as well as of my own. I believe this Consideration to be Apology enough for giving you this Trouble; and yet there is more to be said: We are not now left at Liberty to suspend our Judgments, But we are required to act in Compliance with the present Power: If we do not, we hazard our Liberty and Property; and if we do, (for all that I can see yet) we do more then hazard our Eternal Salvation. I know to a good Christian it can be no question, which if these ought to be preferred, when ever they are set in Competition, as in the present Case to me they are; but in Prudence I may, Nay! In Justice to my Self, and Family, I ought to endeavour, as far, as Honestly I can, to enjoy Peace in this World, as well as in the next: This makes me press for a removal of such Doubts as arise in my way from the late and present Proceedings. And I must again and again inforce it, because we *Clergy-men* have in some degree other Mens Consciences to quiet as well as our own.

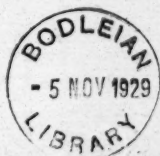
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Therefore to come to the Business. I take it for granted that *JAMES* the Second was the True and Lawful Heir of these Kingdoms; after the Death of King *CHARLES* the Second of Blessed Memory; upon whose Decease King *JAMES* succeeded to, and was rightly Invested with the Government of these Kingdoms, and all the Just Rights and Privileges belonging to the Imperial Crown of *England*. Now I desire to be Informed by you *Sir*, or any Man else, by what Authority, or upon what Score, he is not Owned, Obeyed, and Prayed for as King still; since God (as far as we know) has not yet called Him into another World? His Deserting, or Abdicating the Government, is a pretence so Full of Shame and Naucious, that my Conscience cannot get it down, whatever theirs can do, that have Revenge or Interest in their Minds to help to digest it. And especially at this time of the Day, when the World knows from His Majesties Letters to the Convention; and from his present Endeavours that He Desires, and Resolves to try (by the help of God and good Men) to Recover His Throne, out of which he has been strangely Jostled: I say strangely, because the Nation having been bubbled once before, by Men that pretended to keep our Religion and Property (as indeed they did, but it was from us, not for us, they proving just such Patriots, as the *Storke* in the Fable, or the *Ostriches* were Stewards) that we should fall into a like Mistake and Misfortune again, while our Teeth are yet on edge for the Sour Grapes that our Fathers Eat, is very surprizing. But in our Age of Paradoxes, we will let the wonder alone, and come to our Duty.

Christ and his Apostles taught Submission and Obedience to Kings and Emperours; yea, to the worst of them; and the Primitive Christians alwayes Believed, and Behaved themselves accordingly, suffering patiently the extremest Injuries in Goods and Person that an imperious Cruelty could lay upon them: And this not for want of Courage; for how could they fear Death, that every day expected and suffered it; nor for want of Strength, for they were Numerous in their Cities, in their Forts, in their Armies, as we are assured by them that could tell. Now this very Doctrine of *Passive Obedience* or *Non-Resistance*, is that which the Church of *England* was wont to value it self upon, as that whereby it manifested its *Apostolick Primitive Spirit*, and whereby we eminently distinguished it from the *Papists* and *Dissenters*, who we know, were wont to agree in this damnable Doctrine of *Rebelling against*, or *Deposing Kings*. And because Revenge, Love of the World, or fear of Persecution, are apt to give a false Byass to Mens Judgements (as we see by woful Experience; by the Glosses and Expositions that were given to the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles professed by this Church, by the Men of 41 now in Vogue again) The Church of *England* has taken a particular Care to make this Doctrine of *Non-Resistance* her own, and to bind it upon her Sons by the strongest Tyes that could be invented. For we of the Clergy must remember, that we are admitted into no Degree in the *Universities*, without assuring our Allegiance by Oath. Not that our Allegiance was not due before, but by our Oath we refer to God as a Witness and Judge of our Integrity, when we so declare to Men. When we enter into our *Deacons Orders*; we take the Oath of *Allegiance* and *Supremacy* again, promising, *To bear Faith and True Allegiance to the Kings Highness, His Heirs, and Lawful Successors*, (this is not all) and to our Power shall Assist and Defend all *Jurisdictions, Privileges, Pre-eminences, and Authorities, Granted or belonging to the Kings Highness, His Heirs, and Successors, &c.* And because a Sect of Men had undertaken to exclude and set aside their Oathes: Upon the Restoration of the Church with King *Charles* the 2^d. the Three Estates of this Realm Assembled in Parliament, made a Solemn Recognition 12 Car. 2. cap. 30. That by the undoubted and Fundamental Laws of this Kingdom, neither the Peers of this Realm, nor the Commons, nor both together in Parliament, nor the People Collectively, nor Representatively, nor any other Persons whatsoever, ever had, have, hath, or ought to have any Co-ordinate Power with the Persons of the Kings of their Realm; and to Enforce this with all possible weight; and to Exclude that absurd Notion of Co-ordination, by making the King one of the Three Estates, and therefore less and constructively inferior to the other Two, they made another Act 13 Car. 2. Declaring the Sword to be solely in the King's Power, and that neither one nor both Houses in Parliament can, or Lawfully may Raise or Levy any War Offensive or Defensive against His Majesty, &c. Besides this, there is a particular Declaration provided in the Act, for Uniformity over and above our Subscription to the XXXIX. Articles, of which the XXXV. is not to be forgotten, viz. That it is not Lawful upon any pretence whatsoever, to take up Arms against the King, &c. so very careful have both the Church and State been to Establish Loyalty. They that desire to see this Argument discussed at large, let them among many more, read these Excellent Pieces, Dr. *Hicke's* *Jovian*, Dr. *Sherlock* of *Non-Resistance*, and Bishop *Morley's* Vindication of himself from Mr. *Baxter*.

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But this till removed, is a sufficient Gag to my Conscience, to keep me from acting and concurring with the present Power. And if this be the Doctrine of our Church and the Law of the Land, as by the Book of *Homilies*, the XXXIX. *Articles*, the *Common-Prayer-Book*, and *Statute-Book*, undoubtedly it is: I would fain know by what means my Conscience may be discharged from what I have Declared, and Sworn to be my Duty, that is, not only to Obey, but also to Defend and Maintain King *James* the Second, who is, and ought to be my Sovereign while God grants Him Life. I say, upon these Grounds, He ought to be our Sovereign still. For *Abdicating* without His Will and Intention, is what I perfwade my self, was never heard of before; and being without Precedent, I may truly say is without Sense. I have been put in mind of Bishop *Sanderson's* Case of Submission to *Usurpers*, and I have with great Pleasure and Approbation, read that Judicious Treatise. But as I do not think the present Power, out of respect to their Credit, would make that its Foundation, so if they would, I cannot think that Case comes up at all to our Circumstances; for I cannot let my self down into so mean an Opinion of my Countrey-Mens Courage, whatever I think of their Honesty, as to imagine that Eleven or Twelve Thousand *Dutch-Men*, though each of them had Soul enough to inform his Bulk, or had Courage equal to his Corps, were able to Conquer one County of *England*, well resolved; and to say we have Conquered our selves, is like *Abdicating* against our wills, very Monstrous to any Man of Honour or Conscience, we ought at least to try the Prowess of these *Anakins*, and not ingloriously without a Stroak become their Vassals, and pay them for it too, as we are like to do at a round Rate.

Sure we can no longer be so stupid, as not to see how some Men by the Noise and Presence of an *Impostor Prince*, have Sham'd a King upon us. I confess I have the more resentment, because the Honour, as well as the Peace of a Mans Countrey is to be regarded; for as such a Change, upon the Terms we must have it, makes us the wonder of some, it will inevitably make us the scorn of all. But I forget that where there is no Conscience, there can be no Sense of Honour; and therefore a Declamation may indeed ease my Spleen, but cannot be expected much to help their Judgments.

The Tyes of Religion and the Honour of our Countrey, which at present suffers extremity, being so Sacred, and so Inviolable, I am not able to give my self any satisfaction, as to my Conscience, (therefore Sir, I desire it from you or any good Body) how we can Innocently sit still and see our Sovereign Exterminated His Kingdom, and Deprived of His Crown and Dignities.

For the Maxim is evidently true in respect of Government, and Civil Community, That *Malum qui non prohibet cum possit, jubet*. In our Saviour's Phrase, *He that is not with the Government, is against it*. And accordingly by our Law, & *He that Conceals Treason, is lyable to suffer an Accessary to it*. If *David's* Heart recoyled for cutting off the Skirt of *Saul's* Garment, ours will fly in our Faces, to have Stript our King of all He has; And I cannot for my Life see how, without the greatest Injustice, as well as the greatest Baseness, we can be quiet, and not heartily (*bona fide*) as before God, whose Anointed He is, endeavour His Restouration.

The Greatest, I had almost said, the Only Obstacle worth Note; that appears to me, is the apprehension of the King's *Popery*, or exasperated Indignation: but they must have a very mean Opinon indeed of the King's Judgment, that can think He will scruple to Restore by Pardon, not only His mistaken, but most, if not all His Malicious Subjects: or that having felt the effects of false Measures, and ill Councils, He will again go about to advance His Religion so contrary to the Law and Genius of the Nation.

But if we can be so meanly perswaded of the King's Intellect; let us not be so of God's Providence too: The Hearts of Kings are in his Hand, and he turns them as the Rivers of Water, whethersoever he pleases; We are assured of God's Power and Providence, and why should we doubt his Care and Kindness; if we do not forfeit it by going about to take his Work into our hands, to be our own Carvers? Methinks it is very preposterous to make Shipwrack of our Faith, for fear of a Storm of Persecution; or, least our Church should split upon the Rock of *Popery*, to throw all our Religion over-board; Sure we may venture to trust God with our Persons and Posterity, whom we must trust with our Souls. And yet really I must say if the King were upon His Throne, in as full Power as ever; we might if we were not wanting to our selves, give the King His Due, and yet keep our Consci-
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ences and our Laws too. And, as many honest Gentlemen stood their Ground: so (I hope) more hereafter, if ever there be occasion, will follow their Example. But be that as it will, or as God pleases, why should not we repose our whole Trust in him that has heretofore wrought so many Wonders for us? *This is the Victory that overcomes the World, even our Faith, Joh. 5. 4.*

In short, by the Constitution of our Government as King *Charles* left it, and as King *James* the Second found and possess'd it, we are not only restrained from resisting the King, but we are bound to defend His Person, and support His Crown and Dignity. My Question is therefore, what has dissolved that Constitution and set my Conscience at liberty? Not the danger our Religion was it; for that directs and obliges us to commit our selves to God: not the King's breaking in upon the Laws; for we are allowed upon no pretence whatsoever, to take up Arms against Him, He being accountable to none but God: not a Conquest, so that, to save our Consciences, we must throw our Lives and Estates at the Conquerors Feet; for sure no *English-Man* besides his Duty, can brook such a thought in point of Honour or Policy. Upon this short view of the whole, I can much less see how we can put our Lawful King out, and put another into our Publick Prayers, in which we ought not to Dissemble or Parget with God or Man.

Thus Sir, I have propos'd to you my Doubt, with most of those Appendant Circumstances which have encreased and ty'd it upon my Conscience. If you can clear it, I implore your Charity to do it, *Si Pergama dextrâ defendi possint certè hæc.* If not, I may say in Justice you are obliged to take my part, who protest solemnly before God, I have no other end but to discharge my Conscience to God, his Church, and my Country, whatever Opinion or Usage I may have among Men; God of his Mercy grant that Truth and Justice may prevail; and that unfeigned Religion and Piety may Flourish here, and make us the Praise, as we are now the Reproach of Christianity. *Amen.*

1689 - Cat. p 112 B.

